

Child and Family Services Review Training Materials

- [Philosophy and Conceptual Framework](#)
- [Practice Principles](#)
- [Steps in the Review Process](#)
- [Roles and Responsibilities of the Onsite Review Team](#)
- [Tips for Reviewers: The Statewide Assessment Process](#)
- [Tips for Reviewers: Participating in Entrance and Exit Conferences](#)
- [Tips for Reviewers: Reviewing Case Records and Completing the Onsite Review Instrument](#)
- [Tips for Reviewers: Conducting Case-Related Interviews](#)
- [Tips for Reviewers: Participating in Review Debriefings](#)

Children's Bureau Child and Family Services Reviews Philosophy and Conceptual Framework

Updated March 2007

The Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs), authorized by the 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act (SSA) and administered by the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), provide a unique opportunity for the Federal Government and State child welfare agencies to work as a team in assessing States' capacity to promote positive outcomes for children and families engaged in the child welfare system.

The child and family services reviews are based on a number of central principles and concepts, including the following:

- **Partnership Between the Federal and State Governments**

The CFSRs are a Federal-State collaborative effort. A review team composed of both Federal and State staff conducts the reviews and evaluates State performance.

- **Examination of Outcomes of Services to Children and Families and State Agency Systems That Affect Those Services**

The reviews examine State programs from two perspectives. First, the reviews assess the outcomes of services provided to children and families. Second, they examine systemic factors that affect the agency's ability to help children and families achieve positive outcomes.

- **Identification of State Needs and Strengths**

The reviews are designed to capture both State program strengths and areas needing improvement. The reviews include a program improvement process that States use to make improvements, where needed, and build on identified State strengths.

- **Use of Multiple Sources To Assess State Performance**

The review team collects information from a variety of sources to make decisions about a State's performance. These sources include a Statewide Assessment, completed by State members of the review team; data; onsite reviews of a sample of case records and case-related interviews with children, parents, foster parents, and caseworkers and other professionals knowledgeable about a case; and interviews with State and community stakeholders.

- **Promotion of Practice Principles**

Through the reviews, the Children's Bureau promotes States' use of practice principles believed to support positive outcomes for children and families. These are family-centered practice, community-based services, individualizing services that address the unique needs of children and families, and strengthening parents' capacity to protect and provide for children.

- **Emphasis on Accountability**

The reviews emphasize accountability. While the review process includes opportunities for States to make program improvements before having Federal funds withheld because of nonconformity, there are significant penalties associated with the failure to make the improvements needed to attain substantial conformity.

- **Focus on Improving Systems**

State child welfare agencies determined to be out of conformity through the review develop Program Improvement Plans (PIP) for strengthening their systems' capacity to create positive outcomes for children and families. The Children's Bureau provides support to States during the PIP development and implementation process.

- **Enhancement of State Capacity To Become Self-Evaluating**

Through conducting the Statewide Assessment and participating in the onsite review, States will become familiar with the process of examining outcomes for children and families and systemic factors that affect those outcomes. They can adapt this process for use in the ongoing evaluation of their systems and programs.

Children's Bureau Child and Family Services Reviews Practice Principles

Updated March 2007

The Child and Family Services Reviews, administered by the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, are designed to promote the following practice principles, which are believed to support improved outcomes for children and families:

- **Family-Centered Practice, which is designed to:**
 - Strengthen, enable, and empower families to protect and nurture their children
 - Safely preserve family relationships and connections when appropriate
 - Recognize the strong influence that social systems have on individual behavior
 - Enhance family autonomy
 - Respect the rights, values, and cultures of families
 - Focus on an entire family rather than select individuals within a family

- **Community-Based Practice, which is designed to:**
 - Support the needs of children within the context of their families and communities
 - Emphasize prevention-oriented services and supports
 - Provide local communities a role in identifying, designing, implementing, and overseeing services within the community

- **Individualizing Services, which is designed to:**
 - Tailor interventions to meet the specific needs of children and families served
 - Recognize that children and families are affected by both individual and environmental factors
 - Recognize that children and families and the environments in which they operate are unique
 - Offer children and families opportunities to provide input in the identification of their strengths, needs, and goals and the means to achieve those goals

- **Strengthening Parental Capacity, which is designed to:**
 - Enhance services and support for both parents and recognize the value of involving both parents in the care of their children
 - Promote parents' strengths and self-esteem by emphasizing partnership with service providers
 - Balance parental need for autonomy in decision-making with the need for ongoing support

Children's Bureau Child and Family Services Reviews Steps in the Review Process

Updated March 2007

The Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) were authorized by the 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act (SSA) and are administered by the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The Children's Bureau launched the review system in fiscal year 2000, with several States beginning the Statewide Assessment phase of the process. The steps in the review process are as follows:

- **Determine the Date for the Review**

The Children's Bureau Central and Regional Office staff determine the dates for the reviews in collaboration with State child welfare agency officials. Reviews must be conducted within the timeframes specified in 45 CFR 1355.32.

- **Form the Review Team**

The review team comprises both Federal and State staff (with trained consultant reviewers supplementing the Federal component of the team). Federal staff select the Federal and consultant reviewers. State agency officials determine which agency staff will serve as part of the State team and identify individuals and community stakeholders who will assist the State in conducting the Statewide Assessment and onsite components of the review process, and the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) process, as needed.

- **Conduct Planning Conference Calls**

The Children's Bureau Central and Regional Office staff conduct a series of review planning conference calls with each State (five formal review planning calls are held with each State; the Children's Bureau staff also host other calls with the State to discuss State data issues, the Statewide Assessment, and onsite review planning functions, as needed).

- **Transmit Data Profiles to the State**

The Federal Government compiles data submitted by the State to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) into safety and permanency data profiles that the States use in completing their Statewide Assessment. If the State does not have complete NCANDS data, it must provide the required data from an alternative source approved by the Children's Bureau Regional Office overseeing the State's review.

- **Complete the Statewide Assessment**

The Statewide Assessment is the first phase of the two-phase review process (the second is the onsite review). The Statewide Assessment provides States with the opportunity to examine data in relation to their programmatic goals and outcomes for children. State Review Teams conduct the assessment collaboratively with external State partners from their title IV-B and IV-E planning process, with the support of the Children's Bureau Regional Office staff.

- **Designate Onsite Review Sites**

The Children's Bureau Central and Regional Office staff and the State jointly identify three sites in the State in which the onsite review activities will occur. The State's largest metropolitan subdivision is a required site; the review in the metropolitan site typically is conducted by two teams. The other two sites are selected on the basis of information in the Statewide Assessment.

- **Select the Sample and Types of Cases To Be Reviewed**

States work with the Children's Bureau Central and Regional Office staff to determine the number of cases to be reviewed during the onsite component of the review, by site and type of case (foster care or in-home services cases), based on information in the Statewide Assessment.

- **Prepare and Disseminate the Preliminary Assessment**

The Children's Bureau Regional Office prepares an analysis of the Statewide Assessment on the Summary of Findings Form; this constitutes the Preliminary Assessment. The Preliminary Assessment is distributed to the review team members before the onsite review.

- **Prepare for the Onsite Review**

The State selects the 50 cases for the onsite review from a sample of 150 foster care cases and 150 in-home services cases randomly identified by the Children's Bureau. The State, in collaboration with the Children's Bureau Regional Office, also schedules case-related interviews and State and local stakeholder interviews; prepares reviewer schedules; and plans logistical arrangements, for example, hotels and transportation for State Review Team members and space for meetings and review activities. The Children's Bureau Central and Regional Offices collaborate with the State and the Child Welfare Review Projects to ensure that all review-related preparation is completed. The Children's Bureau Central and Regional Offices, for example, work together to approve the site selection, with the State to assign reviewers to the local sites, and with the Child Welfare Review Projects to provide training about the onsite review to the State Review Team and to distribute review-related materials before the onsite review.

- **Conduct the State Team Training**

The Children's Bureau provides, through the Child Welfare Review Projects, a 1½-day training on the CFSRs for State Review Team members. The training focuses on the onsite component of the review process and typically is conducted approximately 2 weeks before a State's onsite review. The training provides an overview of the Onsite Review Instrument and automated CFSR Data Management System; State Review Team members then apply the instrument to a "mock case" to gain hands-on experience with the case record review process. The training also provides participants with experience in preparing for case-related interviews and debriefings, and presents an overview of entrance and exit conferences and the process for determining findings.

- **Conduct the Onsite Review of the State**

The onsite review comprises case record reviews; case-related interviews with children, parents, foster parents, caseworkers, and others knowledgeable about the case; and interviews with State and local stakeholders. The review is completed in 1 week by a joint Federal and State Review Team.

- **Complete and Issue the Final Report**

The Children's Bureau works closely with the Federal contractor responsible for the Final Report to prepare the report within 30 calendar days of the onsite review or resolution of any discrepancies in information collected during the Statewide Assessment and onsite review. The Final Report includes the written determination of substantial conformity for each of the outcomes and systemic factors reviewed.

- **Develop the Program Improvement Plan**

If a State is determined to be out of conformity on any of the seven outcomes or seven systemic factors reviewed, it develops, in collaboration with the Children's Bureau Regional Office, a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) that addresses all areas of nonconformity. The State submits the plan to the Children's Bureau Regional Office for approval within 90 calendar days of receiving written notice of nonconformity.

- **Implement the PIP**

The State implements the approved PIP and receives technical assistance during this period through sources identified in the plan. The Children's Bureau Regional Office monitors implementation of the plan through quarterly reports submitted by the State and other methods identified in the plan.

- **Withhold Federal Funds for Nonconformity**

If a State fails to make the improvements needed to bring areas of nonconformity into substantial conformity, or does not submit a PIP, Federal funds are withheld from the State commensurate with the level of nonconformity.

- **Conduct Subsequent Reviews**

For States determined to be in substantial conformity, re-reviews are conducted at 5-year intervals, with an interim Statewide Assessment prepared by the State 3 years after the onsite review. States determined not to be in substantial conformity are required to begin a full review 2 years after the approval of their PIP.

Children's Bureau

Child and Family Services Reviews

Roles and Responsibilities of the Onsite Review Team

Updated March 2007

The Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) were authorized by the 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act (SSA) and are administered by the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Teams of Federal and State staff conduct the CFSRs, with consultant reviewers supplementing the Federal component of the team. Below is a description of the composition and responsibilities of the Onsite Review Team (see the *Child and Family Services Reviews Procedures Manual* for information on the Statewide Assessment and Program Improvement Plan Development Team):

- **Composition of the Review Team**
 - Team Leaders
 - Federal National Review Team (NRT) Team Leader: A Federal agency representative who provides overall leadership for the onsite review and is a member of the NRT. The NRT comprises staff from the Federal Children's Bureau Central and Regional Offices and provides leadership to the review teams in planning and conducting the CFSRs.
 - Children's Bureau Regional Office Team Leader: A Children's Bureau Regional Office representative who assists in providing overall leadership for the onsite review.
 - State Team Leader: A State agency representative who serves as the State's lead representative for the onsite review.
 - Local Site Leaders
 - NRT Local Site Leader: Four Federal representatives from the NRT, each of whom provides leadership to a review team in one of the three local review sites (there are four onsite review teams; the review in the metropolitan site typically is conducted by two teams).
 - Federal Local Site Leader: Up to eight Federal representatives, as needed, who assist in providing leadership to the review team in one of the three local sites. One of the individuals filling this role at each site may be a high-performing and specially trained consultant who has served on multiple CFSRs.
 - State Local Site Leader: Four State agency representatives, each of whom serve as the State's lead representative for one of the four local teams. The State Local Site Leaders work closely with the NRT Local Site Leaders during the onsite review.
 - Reviewers: Review team members who conduct case record reviews and case-related interviews at one of the three local review sites. Reviewers comprise the following:
 - Federal agency representatives or specially trained consultants with skills and experience in the child welfare field

- State representatives who are State child welfare agency staff or representatives of the agency's external partners in the CFSR planning process

The Federal Review Team also may include Children's Bureau Regional Office staff from Regions other than the one responsible for the State being reviewed and State child welfare staff from States other than the State being reviewed (cross-State participants).

In addition, a Local Site Coordinator provides support to the review team of each local site by: scheduling case-related and stakeholder interviews; preparing reviewer schedules; planning and managing the logistical arrangements during the review week, such as transportation to interviews; reserving space for all onsite review activities, including meetings, case record review, debriefings, and some interviews; handling the rescheduling of interviews as necessary; and providing general support to the Onsite Review Team.

Children's Bureau Child and Family Services Reviews The Statewide Assessment Process

Updated March 2007

The Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs), administered by the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, are designed to support stronger Federal and State partnerships in assessing and then developing strategies for enhancing State child welfare policies and practices. The reviews, which focus on child and family outcomes in three domains (safety, permanency, and well-being), comprise two phases: (1) Statewide Assessment, and (2) onsite review.

The goals of phase 1, the Statewide Assessment, are to support States in examining the effectiveness of their policies and practices in preparation for the onsite review and to examine outcomes for children and families on the basis of Statewide aggregate data. The Statewide Assessment provides a snapshot of the State child welfare practices and outcomes. Information from both the Statewide Assessment and the onsite review is analyzed to determine the State's substantial conformity with the State plan and other program requirements under review.

The State conducts the Statewide Assessment in collaboration with State representatives who are not staff of the State agency and who represent the sources consulted with during the development of the State's title IV-B State plan. The Children's Bureau Central and Regional Office staff consult with, and provide support to, the State during the Statewide Assessment process.

In conducting the Statewide Assessment, the State uses the Statewide Assessment Instrument to compile information on State operations and to examine those operations in the context of outcomes for children and families. The instrument comprises the following sections:

- Section I: General Information
- Section II: Safety and Permanency Data

The Children's Bureau provides to the States, in report format, data extracted from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). (States can use another approved source of data in the absence of NCANDS data, as outlined in the *Child and Family Services Reviews Procedures Manual*.)

The AFCARS and NCANDS data provide point-in-time profiles of the State's foster care and child protective service populations; this gives the State information on the status of the service populations as of a given date. The AFCARS data also are used to provide States with information on the cohort group of children entering foster care for the first time in their lives during the period under review.

- Section III: Narrative Assessment of Child and Family Outcomes

The questions in this section help State agencies examine their data in relation to the three outcome domains under review (safety, permanency, and well-being).

- Section IV: Systemic Factors

In this section, State child welfare agencies, in cooperation with their external partners, answer questions related to the following: (1) statewide information system capacity; (2) case review system; (3) quality assurance system; (4) staff and provider training; (5) service array; (6) agency responsiveness to the community; and (7) foster home licensing, recruitment, and retention.

- Section V: State Assessment of Strengths and Needs

In this section, the State answers questions regarding the strengths of the agency's programs as identified by the review team and areas that may warrant further exploration during the onsite review (especially those reflected in the outcome data). The State agency also comments on its experience with the Statewide Assessment process.

The Statewide Assessment process works best when the State works closely with the Children's Bureau Regional Office staff designated as the lead person for its review. The State provides interim drafts of the assessment to the Children's Bureau Regional Office staff, who then can provide feedback throughout the Statewide Assessment development process. The Children's Bureau Regional Office staff will help ensure that the Statewide Assessment meets the following requirements:

- Focuses on evaluating State systems, not just describing them
- Provides information on specific State policies and practices
- Helps reviewers explore if and how caseworkers are implementing State policies with the goal of improving services to children and families

Once the State submits the completed instrument to the Children's Bureau Regional Office, the lead staffperson, with the support of the Children's Bureau Central Office, conducts an analysis of the Statewide Assessment and completes portions of a Summary of Findings Form with information from the Statewide Assessment. This analysis is called the Preliminary Assessment.

The Preliminary Assessment is then shared with the review team members who will conduct the onsite review. One of the purposes of the onsite review activities (case record reviews, case-related interviews, and stakeholder interviews) is to examine onsite findings in comparison to the information in the Statewide Assessment.

Reviewers should examine the Statewide Assessment and Preliminary Assessment for the following purposes:

- To obtain a snapshot of the State child welfare system

- To review State policies and practices listed in the Statewide Assessment and compare them to practices identified through case record review and interviews
- To use as a point of comparison when discussing systemic factors during the debriefings, which occur nightly at each local site during the onsite review

Children's Bureau Child and Family Services Reviews Participating in Monday Morning Team Meetings and Exit Conferences

Updated March 2007

The purpose of the Monday morning team meetings and exit conferences is to bring together the Federal and State team members involved in the onsite review. The Federal and State Team Leaders and Local Site Leaders lead these conferences; other review team members play the role(s) assigned to them by the Team Leader or Local Site Leaders during these events. The Monday morning team meetings and local exit conferences involve the entire local site team. The statewide exit conference is conducted at a central location (usually in the State capital) and involves only the Team Leaders and Local Site Leaders. Consultant reviewers are released from the review following the local exit conference.

Monday Morning Team Meeting

The following activities occur during the Monday morning team meeting at each local site:

- Introduction of Federal and State members of the review team
- A brief presentation of the review process, emphasizing the partnership approach
- An overview of State policies or other State-specific issues related to the onsite review (such as case record organization)
- Discussion of logistical arrangements for the local site (for example, the review week schedule)
- Distribution of computer equipment used to complete the Onsite Review Instrument

Exit Conference

During the local site exit conference, the Local Site Leaders provide an overview of the preliminary review findings for the site.

During the statewide exit conference, the Federal Team Leader provides to the State representatives an overview of the preliminary onsite review findings. The Team Leader presents the findings as tentative, pending a final and complete analysis of the information collected through the onsite review. A determination of substantial conformity is not discussed during the exit conference; it is provided to the State in the Final Report.

The following activities occur during the exit conference:

- Presentation of preliminary findings, including strengths and areas needing improvement
- Discussion of issues that may require resolution during the Final Report development process

- A brief overview of the next steps in the review process (preparation and submission to the State of the Final Report; development and monitoring of a Program Improvement Plan [PIP], as needed; and the availability of technical assistance)
- Acknowledgement of the contributions of the State Team Leader, State team members, consultant reviewers, and Federal staff

Role of the Review Team Members

Review team members should be available to participate in both the Monday morning team meeting and exit conference, as requested by the Team Leaders or Local Site Leaders. While Team Leaders or Local Site Leaders will be the primary presenters during these events, they may ask other review team members to share information on a particular case; they also may call upon a team member with expertise in a particular area. In participating in Monday morning team meeting or exit conferences, review team members should do the following:

- Remain neutral in tone while presenting information
- Present factual information, not opinions, unless called upon to do so directly by the Team Leader or Local Site Leader (not by State personnel)
- Be alert to the needs of the Team Leader or Local Site Leader, and assist in looking for supporting information when they are engaged in a dialogue with State representatives
- Help promote an atmosphere of partnership between the Federal Review Team and the State agency representatives

Children's Bureau Child and Family Services Reviews Reviewing Case Records and Completing the Onsite Review Instrument

Updated March 2007

During the onsite review phase of the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs), review pairs comprising a Federal and State reviewer review two or three case records. The purpose of the case record reviews is to examine and document a State's efforts to conform to Federal requirements in three areas: safety, permanency, and child and family well-being. Below are steps for reviewing case records and documenting the findings on the Onsite Review Instrument.

- **Review the Completed Preliminary Assessment Before the Onsite Review**

The Preliminary Assessment, prepared by the Children's Bureau Regional Office staff, provides you with an overview of the State with regard to the population in the child welfare system, the State or child welfare agency's areas of policy emphasis, and the systemic factors. One of the goals of the onsite review is to corroborate the information contained in the Statewide Assessment.

- **Read the Onsite Review Instrument Before Participating in a Review**

Become familiar with the information that you must collect to complete the instruments during the case record review and related interviews. Re-read the Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions just before participating in a review.

- **Organize Your Review of the Case Record**

Develop a plan for reviewing the case record so that you can focus on quickly accomplishing the key tasks:

- Reviewing the case history to determine how the child became involved with the agency
- Looking for the specific information you need to complete the Onsite Review Instrument
- Focusing information collection activities on the period under review, except when otherwise instructed by the Onsite Review Instrument to review the entire case history
- Flagging questions on the instrument that you will need to ask parents/foster parents, caseworkers, and other professionals who are knowledgeable about the case
- Noting areas in which information is incomplete or missing and will need to be collected through interviews.

- Arranging through the Local Site Leader, if necessary, to schedule interviews with individuals for whom an interview was not previously scheduled
- **Fill Out the Onsite Review Instrument During the Review of Case Records**

Reviewers have found that it is more efficient to record information directly on the instrument than to make separate notes and attempt to complete the instrument later (when it will be more difficult to track missing information).

Conversely, it may be appropriate to take notes during interviews related to the case and then complete the Onsite Review Instrument immediately after the interviews.

- **Note Clearly the Reasons for Your Findings**

When completing the Onsite Review Instrument, be sure to provide adequate documentation for your findings. Use clear sentence structure so that the Local Site Leaders and Team Leaders can easily review and understand your documentation.

- **Review the Completed Instrument**

Carefully review the completed instrument using the Quality Assurance Checklist to ensure that all required information is included.

Children's Bureau Child and Family Services Reviews Conducting Case-Related Interviews

Updated March 2007

After reviewing case records, review team members conduct case-related interviews with children, parents, foster parents, case managers, and other professionals working with the child(ren). The interviews are not "customer satisfaction surveys," but rather an opportunity to confirm case record documentation, collect information missing from the records, and obtain the perspective of children and families with regard to the support and services they are receiving from the State child welfare agency in relation to the goals established for that child and family.

Review team members can participate effectively in the case-related interviews by doing the following:

- **Complete the Case Record Review**

Review the case record, noting the areas in which information is incomplete or missing, or should be confirmed by another party.

- **Become Familiar With the Core Questions and Exploratory Issues**

Review the core questions and exploratory questions, noting especially those sections of the Onsite Review Instrument for which you did not identify sufficient information during the case record review.

- **Prepare the Interview Questions**

Prepare a list of the questions that you will need to ask during the interviews.

- **Introduce Yourself and the Interview Process**

Try to put people at ease with some introductory small talk; introduce yourself and explain the interview process. Let interviewees know approximately the number of questions that you will need to ask or the amount of time that the interview might take.

- **Provide an Overview of the Review Process**

Provide individuals with a brief overview of the purpose of the review process and the interview. Avoid using jargon; simply explain that the Federal and State governments are looking at how well the State is helping children and families reach their own goals. Let parents or foster parents know that you are interested in learning about their experiences so that the review team can determine how the State can better support children and families.

- **Reassure Participants of the Confidential Nature of the Interviews**

Explain that the information collected through this and other interviews will be part of a report on the review of the State child welfare system. Emphasize that the comments of particular individuals will not be identified by name in the report. You can reinforce participants' confidence in the confidentiality of the interview by not revealing the comments of other persons interviewed, particularly those involved with the family. Stressing confidentiality is particularly important when interviewing children, parents, or foster parents.

- **Ensure That Participants Are Comfortable With the Process**

Ask participants whether they have questions they would like to ask before getting started. Try to use a conversational approach with children and families rather than attempting to follow a specific list of questions. Avoid asking questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no; ask open-ended questions, particularly with people who may appear less comfortable with the interview process.

Do not push for information, particularly when the interviewee is a child or parent/foster parent. The goal of the interviews is to obtain information without making any of the participants uncomfortable. If a child does not want to participate, he or she should not be required to do so.

- **Remain Neutral in Your Reactions**

Interviewers may react empathetically (for example, "I hear that you are upset by the situation") but should avoid reacting strongly to particular responses or making judgmental comments about a State agency's response to a particular situation.

- **Address Conflicts in Information**

Be prepared to address conflicts between an interviewee's statements and (1) those of others with whom you have spoken or (2) the information in the case record. Try to do so without directly mentioning the conflict; instead, pursue the line of questioning with regard to the statement in conflict by asking followup questions to clarify an interviewee's initial remarks.

- **Avoid Making Commitments**

Acknowledge complaints raised by people being interviewed but do not commit to checking on their situation or to getting back in touch with them.

- **Note the Interview Results**

Let the participant know in advance that you will need to take notes while he or she is talking. Immediately after the interview, record your notes more completely in the appropriate sections of the Onsite Review Instrument. Do not tape record interviews.

- **Report Child Safety Issues to the Federal Local Site Leaders**

Contact a Local Site Leader immediately following any interviews in which child safety issues are identified.

- **Provide Support to Children**

Coordinate with the Federal Local Site Leaders to ensure that children receive support from their case workers after the interviews. While the interviews are not designed to provoke an emotional reaction, some children may have a less-than-positive response to discussing their situation with a stranger. Social workers, therefore, should be scheduled to meet with children after the interviews.

Children's Bureau Child and Family Services Reviews Participating in Review Debriefings

Updated March 2007

Each evening, the local site teams will debrief the cases reviewed that day. The debriefing process is designed to promote consistency in reviewer ratings, thereby decreasing the subjectivity of the review process. Reviewers can assist the Local Site Leaders in facilitating these debriefings by doing the following:

- Coming prepared to present information on the cases under their review that day; completing the Nightly Debriefing Report included in the Child and Family Services Reviews Data Management System will facilitate this preparation (see attached copy)
- Providing a brief overview of the case (how the child came into care), how each outcome was rated, and why; see the attached sample completed Nightly Debriefing Report for an example of information that should be provided
- Completing the Case Rating Summary Sheet section of the Onsite Review Instrument for each case and noting the page numbers of key notes to which they will need to refer to support their ratings
- Presenting information as concisely as possible, sharing only information that is relevant to the case under review, and ensuring that the information is consistent with the completed Onsite Review Instrument
- Remembering that the purpose of the debriefings is not to educate other team members about all the details of a case or to critique the State's policies or practices, but rather to focus on the reviewers' findings regarding the actions taken by the State during the period under review
- Participating fully in the debriefing discussions while supporting the Local Site Leaders in ensuring that every team member has an equal opportunity to share their opinions
- Understanding the value of the debriefing process and being willing to put their judgments under the scrutiny of the other team members
- Remaining open to the feedback of the group, especially the Local Site Leaders, and being aware of the potential need for review team members to reconsider case ratings following the debriefing process
- Alerting the Local Site Leaders to concerns regarding schedules, logistical arrangements, or other issues that might create challenges in completing the review

Reviewers should come to debriefings prepared to present the information shown below regarding the cases that they have finished reviewing. The presentation should take no more than 10-15 minutes. After the presentation, the reviewer will answer questions from the Local Site Leaders and other team members.

Child and Family Services Reviews

[State] Onsite Review

[Period Under Review]

Nightly Debriefing Report

For Internal Federal Government Use Only

I. Background Information	
Case Name:	
Type of Case:	
Review Team:	
Description of Child:	
Reason for Agency Involvement:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">••••	
Family Structure:	
Permanency Goal(s):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">••	

II. Case History
Case is Open/Closed - Date of Most Recent Case Opening:
History of Maltreatment:
Issues and needs of other family members (parents and children involved in case):

--

Services provided (past and present; identify providers):

--

III. Case Interviews

Name	Relationship to Case	Relationship to Case (Other)	Date of Interview	Type of Interview

IV. Case Ratings

Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

Rating:

Basis for Rating:

Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Rating:

Basis for Rating:

Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Rating:

Basis for Rating:

Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Rating:

Basis for Rating:

Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Rating:

Basis for Rating:

Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.

Rating:

Basis for Rating:

Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

Rating:

Basis for Rating:

Child and Family Services Reviews [State] Onsite Review [Period Under Review]

Sample Completed Nightly Debriefing Report

For Internal Federal Government Use Only

I. Background Information

Case Name: Karen Martin

Type of Case: Foster Care

Review Team: Ann Parker and Lee Jones

Description of Child: Karen is a 10-year-old girl who is in foster care under the care of Mr. and Mrs. Smith, who live in Someplace, approximately 75 miles from Karen's birth mother,

MaryAnn Martin.

Reason for Agency Involvement: The court cited Ms. Martin's substance abuse and neglect of her children as the reason for Karen's removal from her home and placement in foster care. Kathie Ramber, the social worker assigned to this case, has discussed the possibility of adoption with the foster parents, but the foster parents have stated that they are not interested in adopting Karen. In addition, Ms. Ramber believes that Ms. Martin would not be interested in relinquishing parental rights. Ms. Martin has stated that she would consider allowing the Smiths to adopt Karen; however, Ms. Ramber has not discussed this option with Ms. Martin. The Smiths said in their interview that they would allow Karen to remain in their home long-term, but that adoption was not an option. Karen has attended the same school for the past few years and she is performing well academically, despite concerns that she may need special education services.

Family Structure:

Karen Martin	Child
MaryAnn Martin	Mother
Katie Martin	Sister
Kristy Martin	Sister

Permanency Goal(s):

- Adoption

II. Case History

Case is Open/Closed - Date of Most Recent Case Opening: Opened May 3, 2002. Remains Open.

History of Maltreatment: There were three reports of maltreatment related to Karen and her sisters between May 3, 2002, and September 9, 2005. In all three reports, the mother was the perpetrator and the maltreatment consisted of neglect due to substance abuse. After the September 9 report, which was substantiated, Karen and her siblings were removed from their home. Karen was placed in foster care; her siblings were placed in kinship care with a paternal aunt.

Issues and needs of other family members (parents and children involved in case):

The mother needs inpatient substance abuse treatment. Karen and her two sisters need mental health therapy.

Services provided (past and present; identify providers):

Ms. Martin has expressed a desire to seek treatment for her substance abuse problems. Inpatient treatment has been recommended to her. However, she will only agree to outpatient treatment. Ms. Ramber will not recommend her for outpatient services, as she believes it will be ineffective. Currently, Ms. Martin is not receiving any substance abuse treatment. Karen has been receiving the services of a therapist since January 2006 for what has been diagnosed as acute stress disorder. She has had regular visits to a doctor and dentist; neither has

reported health problems. As previously mentioned, Karen may have special education needs, but has yet to be tested.

III. Case Interviews

Name	Relationship to Case	Relationship to Case (Other)	Date of Interview	Type of Interview
Karen Martin	Child		February 26, 2007	In-person
MaryAnn Martin	Mother		February 26, 2007	Telephone
Joann Ramber	Caseworker		February 26, 2007	In-person
Ann Lopez	Mental Health Service Provider		February 26, 2007	In-Person

III. Case Ratings

Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

Rating: Not Achieved

Basis for Rating: Two of the three accepted reports registered during the period under review were not addressed in a timely manner, with no justification provided. In addition, there was evidence of repeat maltreatment of the children, because multiple substantiated reports involving similar circumstances were received on the family during the period under review.

Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Rating: Partially Achieved

Basis for Rating: This outcome was rated as partially achieved because even though the agency is taking adequate steps to ensure the safety of the children while they are placed in foster and kinship care, at first the agency decided to provide in-home services to the family without adequately assessing the needs of the family and the children and without assessing or addressing safety concerns. This lack of adequate in-home services resulted in the children being removed on an emergency basis.

Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Rating: Partially Achieved

Basis for Rating: Even though the child's current foster placement is stable, she has had two entries into care, with the last one occurring less than 6 months from the discharge date of the previous placement. Her current permanency goal of adoption is appropriate, was established in

a timely manner, and a petition to terminate the mother's parental rights was filed within 15 months of her coming into care (the father has signed a relinquishment of parental rights). However, even though the child has been referred to the agency's adoption resource team, no concrete steps are in place that realistically would lead to finalization of an adoption within 24 months of the child's last entry into care.

Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Rating: Partially Achieved

Basis for Rating: Even though adequate efforts were made to explore relative placements for the child and the current placement is stable, she was not placed in close proximity to the mother due to lack of placement resources. In addition, the agency has made only sporadic efforts to promote visitation between the child and her mother and sibling, and has done little to keep the child's connections to her home community and significant others. Likewise, nothing has been done to further promote the relationship between the child and her mother.

Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Rating: Not Achieved

Basis for Rating: The needs of the child, mother, and foster parents were not adequately assessed or identified, and many appropriate services were not provided. Additionally, neither the child nor her mother was involved in case planning, with only minimal attempts being made to involve the mother. Caseworker visits with both the child and mother lacked the frequency necessary to meet individual needs. The few visits conducted also lacked quality, as they failed to focus on goal-setting, progress, and case planning.

Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.

Rating: Substantially Achieved

Basis for Rating: The child is doing well overall in school, her foster parents are very involved in her education, and every effort is being made to encourage the school to meet her special educational needs.

Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

Rating: Partially Achieved

Basis for Rating: Overall, the physical health needs of this child are well met with initial and ongoing physical health assessments and follow-up care provided as needed. However, there are significant emotional needs and mental/behavioral health issues that are not being addressed with weekly therapy, as was professionally recommended.